

every country but their own, and every age except that in which they live, shall not deter me from saying that although I have seen many improvements in actors and acting since I was at the Haymarket, I have never seen artificial comedy acted as it was acted there.

Not that I was much good at it myself. I played Julia in "The Rivals" very ill; it was too difficult and subtle for me—ungrateful into the bargain—and I even made a blunder in bringing down the curtain on the first night. It fell to my lot to finish the play—in players' language, to speak the "tag." Now, it has been a superstition among actors for centuries that it is unlucky to speak the "tag" in full at rehearsal. So during the rehearsals of "The Rivals" I followed precedent and did not say the last two or three words of my part and of the play, but just "mum, mum, mum!" When the first night came, instead of dropping my voice with the last word in the conventional and proper manner, I ended with an upward inflection, which was right for the sense, but wrong for the curtain.

This unexact innovation produced utter consternation all round me. The prompter was so much astounded that he bought there was something more coining and did not give the "pull" for the curtain to come down. There was a horrid pause while it remained up, and then Mr. Buckstone, who was very deaf and had not heard the upward inflection, exclaimed loudly and irritably: "Eh! eh I What does this mean?"

Why the devil don't you bring down the
curtain ? " And
he went on cursing until it did come down.
This ex-
perience made me think more than ever of
the advice
of an old actor: " Never leave your stage
effects to
chance, my child, but *rehearse*, and find out
all about
it!"